



STRANGE PHENOMENA INVESTIGATIONS



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ENIGMAS

.....
UNBIASED ACCOUNTS INVOLVING UNUSUAL OCCURRENCES
AND, AS YET.... UNDISCOVERED SCIENCES....
GHOSTS.... U.F.O'S AND OTHER ITEMS OF WEIRD AND
WONDERFUL PHENOMENA!
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The writer Robert Louis Stevenson attributed many of his literary achievements to an active collaboration between his dreaming and waking mind. He even claimed to be able to dream in sequence, thus picking up a story where it had left off the night before. His famous 'alter-ego' story, "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde", was one such 'bogey' he 'dreamed up'. In reflection I am inclined to find it more than just enthralling that Stevenson not only shared honours with Mary Wollstonecraft Shelly, who wrote Frankenstein, and Bram Stoker, who wrote "Dracula", in providing the literary world with three greatest horror stories of all time, but that he also shared their source of inspiration, the world of dreams; for they too. 'dreamed up their horrors'. How many of our more recent thinkers have 'dreamed up their ideas'? Then again, how many would be prepared to admit their true source. I wonder?

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OPERATION CONGO.

THE FIRST BRITISH/CONGOLESE MOKELE-MBEMBE

EXPEDITION OF 1985-86. PART ONE.

(The following is a report sent to me by a good long standing friend of mine one Billy Gibbons, who at present resides in London. Billy, formerly of Stranraer Scotland, is a seasoned researcher of the paranormal, and, in 1986, took his interest out to Africa with some colleagues in an attempt to determine if there truly was an unknown animal that lurked the swamps of the Congo Basin. This report, of which I serialise, is indeed one of the most interesting features that I've had the fortune to feature in ENIGMAS. I hope that you too find it of interest.)

INTRODUCTION.

Interest in the existence of an extraordinary animal called Mokele-Mbembe has continued since six expeditions from four countries have penetrated the Likouala swamps in search of this creature since the late 1970's. Circumstantial and anecdotal evidence collected by these expeditions concerning the existence of Mokele-Mbembe, has greatly interested the International scientific community, particularly as the described morphology of the animal is similar to that of the sauropod dinosaurs of the Mesozoic. As a result of this, a four man British expedition team was formed with the intention of joining a small Congolese team in a joint effort to explore the Likouala area for further evidence to support the alleged existence of Mokele-Mbembe.

ENIGMAS MAY-JUNE 1990.

In February 1984, correspondence between the British J. Gibbons, and Dr. based at the Parc Zoologie lengthy exchange of that the British team by Dr Agnagna and his D' Jonnie. The designated as Operation strategy covering a 4 region. The Anglo-mobile, consist of young possess good field craft of equipment to a bare were ample, enough for native guides for a period of six months. The completed field strategy was approved by the secretariat General, Monsieur F. Ntsiba, and the Minister for Water and Forests, Monsieur Rigobert Ebondio. It was agreed that the expedition would commence in January 1986 during the dry season, in order to avoid the logistical difficulties faced by previous ventures which operated in the wet season.



spondance was entered into expedition spokesman, Billy Marcellin Agnagna, zoologist Brazzaville. During a correspondence, it was agreed would be joined in Brazzaville assistant, Monsieur D' Jose, expedition, officially Congo, put forward a field month period in the Likouala Congolese team should be physically fit members, knowledge, and keep all items necessity. Medical supplies all six team members and 30

Billy Gibbons left the United Kingdom bound for the West African coast aboard the Elder Dempster vessel, Sokoto. Elder Dempster kindly provided free freight transport for the 350kg of expedition equipment, including berth for B. Gibbons. The 3 remaining British members flew to Brazzaville via Aeroflot at a later date. On December the 3rd, 1985, the Sokoto docked at Point Noire on the Congolese coast. Gibbons later flew to Brazzaville to rendezvous with his three colleagues on December 5th. A meeting was later arranged between the Anglo/Congolese team and representatives of the Ministry for Water & Forests. It was agreed to prepare the necessary documentation in order to allow the venture to proceed by February 1986.

Many days were lost in Brazzaville, with expedition members becoming vulnerable to various stomach problems and bouts of illness. The British team were billeted in a Ministry chalet, which proved detrimental to morale. Living conditions were cramped, and tempers were frayed. However, most of our time was used by testing our field equipment and making slight alterations to our proposed field strategy prior to flying North to Impfondo. During our stay in Brazzaville, we met the Reverend Eugene P. Thomas and his wife Sandy, missionaries to the Northern Congolese. They have been resident in Impfondo since 1955, and founded the tranquil mission station which provides a good deal of medical assistance to the local inhabitants, and a Bible based education.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION.

The documentation was finally completed in January 1986, permitting the expedition team to fly to Brazzaville to Impfondo, some 500 miles north. A base camp was established on the grounds of the mission station, which gave the team some first hand experience in living under canvas and drinking unfiltered water. During a 3 week stay in Impfondo, the British team made a number of brief excursions into the surrounding forest to collect various specimens of insect and reptile life. Help was given in completing the construction of a small leprosy treatment centre, and Gibbons assisted with the reconstruction of the mission Bible school, the work completed only days prior to the 100km air hop over a large swamp to Epena, the last main town situated on the Likouala Aux Herbes River.

With our equipment and main supplies prepared, we bade farewell to Pastor Thomas and the mission staff, leaving behind the beautiful mission station founded on the banks of the Ubangi River, only 400m from Zaire.

ENIGMAS MAY-JUNE 1990.

The airstrip was little more than a tarmac strip, a group of fuel tanks fenced off and an unusual concrete shelter with a tin roof. The air service to Epena was operated by Lina Congo, the national airline, via a small twin engine De Havilland Otter. So cramped was this aircraft, two trips were necessary to ferry both regular passengers and all six explorers plus equipment. The airstrip at Epena was little more than a jungle clearing with no emergency services available in the event of a disaster. Operation Congo were at the least fortunate not to have been forced to trek to Epena through the swamp known as the Vazierre. This was necessary for a previous American venture which had missed the plane.

At Epena, the local police officer arranged for the British team to camp down in a recently built brick hut, whilst Marcellin and D' Jose prepared to make arrangements for the expedition to be transported into the target area by motor-pirogue (dugout canoe). Our stay in Epena lasted four days, during which time Rothermel Walls and Della-Porta became the first whitemen since 1963 to visit a nearby village. The appearance of the 'Mondeles' (Whitemen), caused considerable fear among the village children. Our stay at Epena gave us the opportunity to sample some typical African fare, which included cassava, monkey, and water rodent. This was to give us an idea on the diet which awaited us over the next several weeks in the jungle.



Group photograph: Left to right front row: Mark Rothermel, Jonathan Walls, Bill Gibbons. Rear: various MA witnesses, Dr. M. Agneta with rifle.

allow the team to visit a remote village some 40km south of Djeke to explore an area never before visited by whitemen. Five village men were selected to lead us through the forest to M'Boukou. These included a retired elephant hunter who has observed a strange long-necked animal eating vegetation in the Sangha and Ubangi Rivers on three occasions since 1982. This man is one of the very few local inhabitants who remains unmystified at the presence of these animals, regarding them as natural to the local ecology as the others he encounters.

The trek to M'Boukou took 1½ days, with areas of thick swamp slowing our progress for several hours. The villagers of M'Boukou were quite curious concerning our visit, but proved very helpful and friendly during our stay with them. On this occasion we camped outdoors, keeping our camp fire burning throughout the course of the night. A small lake was situated close to the village, which appeared to be full of good edible fish and turtle. An 8m Nile crocodile was said to inhabit one side of the lake, and the locals encouraged us not to attempt to hunt or photograph the beast. We set off across the lake at dawn in two rather unstable dugouts. Reaching the other side, we began our trek across open savannah punctuated by large termite hills. A thick wooded area hid a small

With a 30ft motor-pirogue and a river guide arranged, we set off down the Likoula Aux Herbes River after breakfast. During the six hour journey, we past a number of Mokele-mbembe haunts which have heralded a number of dramatic encounters with local fishermen over the past several decades. We stopped at the village of Boha during a mail drop and to familiarise ourselves with such a remote region. At nightfall we reached Djeke, a large village one hour away from Boha.

Once again we pitched our tents inside a brick hut (to deter leopard attacks) and held a meeting with the village elders. After explaining the main expedition objectives, the elders agreed to

river which was said to be the local stomping ground for buffalo and elephant. One of our guides claimed to have observed (with some difficulty) a large unidentified animal enter the river during nightfall, then move down river without leaving the water on either side, behaviour untypical of elephants. Our 24 hour observations did not herald any 'monster' sightings, even the elephants stayed away for the day. Our return to the village was welcome, particularly as turtle was to be served as lunch. At nightfall, Rothermel and Walls collected several species of insects, including a vampire bat. We were forced to cut our stay at M'Boukou short by almost one week, mainly due to the limited amount of time we had spent in the forest.

The return trek to Djeke took only one day, leaving time to camp down, change our filthy clothes, and enjoy a dinner of chicken, cassava, and fresh bananas. The fresh spring water tasted like wine compared to the swamp water we were forced to drink during our trek to and from M'Boukou. At Djeke, the retired elephant hunter, Monsieur Immanuel Mongoumela took the four Britons to a wooded area near the river where a specimen of Mokele-Mbembe was said to use as its lair for a short time in 1982. Mongoumela visited the spot barely minutes after the animal had left its lair and headed for the river. Mongoumela found some very unusual footprints leading through the bush, the trail continuing through tall river grass which had been forced aside to a height of 1½ meters, giving the impression that a large heavy tail had been sweeping from side to side as the creature pushed its way towards the river.

Mongoumela noted that the animal did not leave the river via the far bank. When questioned on this, Mongoumela was certain that the animal was not an elephant or crocodile. We were able to observe the footprints which were well preserved in the earth, the area being generally avoided by most of the villagers. The footprints were some 7" in circumference, and incompatible with any of the known animals in the region.



BILLY J. GIBBONS.

Leaving Djeke, the paddle to Boha took almost four hours as no fuel was available to power an outboard motor. Our dwindling supply of petrol was reserved for our lanterns. The Boha villagers were more suspicious of white outsiders. The village elders remember the days of French rule, when the Congolese were treated with the most appalling brutality. Only three years before our arrival, an American expedition broke their word to the people of Boha, visiting the remote and mysterious Lake Telle, (owned by the Boha people), then returning to Brazzaville without leaving the villagers the promised gifts of alcohol and medicine. We attempted to put this right by presenting the village elders with a generous and welcome supply of cigarettes, alcohol, disposable lighters, and 12 bore cartridges for their shotguns. Rothermel held a sick call and found himself treating malaria, diarrhoea, venereal diseases and tropical ulcers. It was surprising to learn that the population of the Likouala swamps can only receive medical treatment when a rarely seen expedition visits, or if they are prepared to make the long and arduous journey to the mission station in Impfondo.

The funding of a small medical post in an easy to reach village in the Likouala region is well within the financial capabilities of the Congolese Government. This would at least reduce the number of people in the Likouala region who fall prey to the hideous disease of leprosy.

Part two of this fascinating account of the search for the Mokele-Mbembe continues in our next issue.